
1. INTRODUCTION

The Parks, Facilities and Recreation Programming Master Plan will guide the planning, design, operations and maintenance of the City of Morgan Hill's Parks and Recreation System for the next twenty years. At a time of rapid change in southern Santa Clara County, recent issues and events reinforce the significance of preparing the Master Plan:

- A visioning process in 1996 identified several recreational facilities as high priorities for the community.
- Residents of Morgan Hill voted to extend the life of the City's Redevelopment Agency in 1999, which has identified funding of community recreational facilities as one of its priorities.
- The City restored the Parks and Recreation Commission in 1998 and has added recreation staff after eliminating the recreation department in 1991 due to severe budget cuts. The City's first recreation programs since 1991 were offered this year.
- The City has recently completed a significant restoration of Community Park ball fields, upgrades to several park play areas, and a new neighborhood park (Nordstrom Park). A temporary skate park will open in December. At the same time, design of a new Community and Cultural Center is well underway. These projects reflect not only the City's improved financial health but also its renewed commitment to parks, recreation facilities and programs.
- With a renewed City recreation program, Morgan Hill has an unparalleled opportunity to expand recreation services to the community through its own programs and through partnerships with other recreation providers. Several non-profit organizations offer a variety of recreation programs to community residents. These include the YMCA, the Mexican American Community Services Agency (MACSA), and numerous sports leagues and organizations.
- The City is currently undergoing an update of its General Plan. Recommendations from the Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Programming Master Plan will be incorporated into the General Plan, resulting in consistency between planning documents.
- Morgan Hill Unified School District (MHUSD) continues to grow, with a new high school planned, remodeling of the existing high school underway, and several other new schools envisioned. The master planning process enables coordination between the City and the School District as new facilities and parks are considered and developed.
- Growth pressures throughout Santa Clara County have resulted in higher land values and a sense of urgency to acquire land for future recreational facilities.

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- Many people moving to Morgan Hill have increased expectations for recreation facilities and services. At the same time, parks, trails and open space contribute to Morgan Hill's small town character and sense of community that is so highly valued by the community.

Master Plan Goals

These issues and events help to define the goals of the Parks, Facilities and Recreation Programming Master Plan:

- Assess community need for new recreational facilities, building on the Vision Morgan Hill process.
- Inventory the current state of Morgan Hill's recreation facilities and programs.
- Provide an opportunity for public input into the parks and recreation planning process.
- Create a plan that meets existing and anticipated future recreation needs within the City's funding capabilities.
- Define the role of the City's Recreation Department *vis-à-vis* other recreation providers.
- Identify the operations and maintenance implications of the plan.
- Identify funding sources for capital improvements and long-term operations and maintenance.
- Develop a phasing plan reflecting community needs and funding availability.
- Develop a set of goals, policies and standards to guide future parks and facility development.

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Opportunities for Public Input

The Master Planning process included several opportunities for public input. Two community meetings were held (at the end of March and early April) to gather input regarding recreation needs. In addition to these community meetings, special meetings were held with representatives of sports leagues and organizations, at the MACSA center, with the Senior Advisory Committee and the Youth Advisory Committee.

Interviews were held with key recreation partners, such as the YMCA and staff from the County Parks and Recreation Department.

In September, a random telephone survey was initiated of 450 residents to further assess community need. The results of the survey have been incorporated into the master plan recommendations.

A third community meeting was held in November to review the summary of findings and recommendations prior to releasing a draft of the master plan.

The Parks and Recreation Commission served as the advisory task force for preparation of the master plan. Monthly review of the master plan was held during regular Commission meetings that were open to the public. Several community members attended these meetings to comment on aspects of the plan.

Relationship to the General Plan Update

Policies of the Parks, Facilities and Recreation Programming Master Plan will be incorporated into the General Plan Update (policy 18d of the draft General Plan Update). Population projections and proposed land uses from the General Plan Update were considered as a part of the Master Plan. Environmental review of the Master Plan as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be incorporated into the General Plan environmental review process. As a result, the two documents will be consistent with each other and will serve to support the parks and recreation goals of the community.